



CONSTITUTION

OF THE

ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY ISAAC KNAPP,
25, CORNHILL.

1838.

res. 7589a. 54 no. 6

CONSTITUTION, & C.

PREAMBLE.

Whereas, we believe that Slavery is contrary to the precepts of Christianity, dangerous to the liberties of the country, and ought immediately to be abolished; and whereas, we believe that the citizens of New England not only have the right to protest against it, but are under the highest obligation to seek its removal by a moral influence; and whereas, we believe that the free people of color are unrighteously oppressed, and stand in need of our sympathy and benevolent co-operation; therefore, recognizing the inspired declaration that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' and in obedience to our Savior's golden rule, 'all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;' we agree to form ourselves into a Society, and to be governed by the following

CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE 1. This society shall be called the

Anti-Slavery Society, and shall be auxiliary to

the

Anti-Slavery Society.

ART. 2. The object of the Society shall be, to endeavor by all means sanctioned by law, humanity, and religion, to effect the abolition of Slavery in the United States; to improve the character and condition of the free people of color, to inform and correct public opinion in relation to their situation and rights, and obtain for them equal civil and political rights and privileges with the whites.

ART. 3. Any person by signing the Constitution, and paying to the Treasurer annually, shall be considered a member of the Society.

ART. 4. The officers of the Society shall be a President, Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and Counsellors, who shall be elected annually, by ballot, and shall hold their respective offices until others are chosen.

ART. 5. The foregoing officers shall constitute a Board of Managers, to whom shall be entrusted the disposition of the funds, and the management of the concerns of the Society.

ART. 6. There shall be a public meeting of the Society annually, on the _____ of _____, at which the Board of Managers shall make a Report of their doings for the past year, and of the income, expenditures, and funds of the Society.

ART. 7. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Society and of the Board of Managers, or in his absence one of the Vice Presidents, or in their absence a President pro tem.

ART. 8. The Secretary shall receive and keep all communications or publications directed to the Society, and shall correspond with any other bodies or individuals, according to the directions of the Society or the Managers,

ART. 9. The Secretary shall notify all meetings of the Society and of the Board of Managers, and keep the records of the same.

ART. 10. The Treasurer shall collect the subscriptions and donations to the Society, hold all its funds, and make payments according to the directions of the Society; he shall keep a true account of the same, and render a statement to accompany the Annual Report of the Society.

ART. 11. This Constitution may be altered at the Annual Meeting for the choice of officers, provided the amendments proposed to be made, have been submitted to the Board of Managers, in writing, previously.

DECLARATION
OF THE
ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION.

ASSEMBLED IN PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 4, 1833.

THE Convention, assembled in the city of Philadelphia to organize a National Anti-Slavery Society, promptly seize the opportunity to promulgate the following DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS, as cherished by them in relation to the enslavement of one-sixth portion of the American people.

More than fifty-seven years have elapsed since a band of patriots convened in this place, to devise measures for the deliverance of this country from a foreign yoke. The corner stone upon which they founded the TEMPLE OF FREEDOM was broadly this—‘that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness.’ At the sound of their trumpet-call, three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood; deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves. They were few in number—poor in resources; but the honest conviction that TRUTH, JUSTICE, and RIGHT were on their side, made them invincible.

We have met together for the achievement of an enterprise, without which, that of our fathers is incomplete; and which, for its magnitude, solemnity, and probable results upon the destiny of the world, as far transcends theirs, as moral truth does physical force.

In purity of motive, in earnestness of zeal, in decision of purpose, in intrepidity of action, in steadfastness of faith, in sincerity of spirit, we would not be inferior to them.

Their principles led them to wage war against their oppressors, and to spill human blood like water, in order to be

free. Ours forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to reject, and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage; relying solely upon those which are spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

Their measures were physical resistance—the marshalling in arms—the hostile array—the moral encounter. Ours shall be such only as the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption—the destruction of error by the potency of truth—the overthrow of prejudice by the power of love—and the abolition of slavery by the spirit of repentance.

Their grievances, great as they were, were trifling in comparison with the wrongs and sufferings of those for whom we plead. Our fathers were never slaves—never bought and sold like cattle—never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion—never subjected to the lash of brutal task masters.

But those, for whose emancipation we are striving,—constituting at the present time at least one-sixth part of our countrymen,—are recognized by the laws, and treated by their fellow-beings, as marketable commodities—as goods and chattels—as brute beasts; are plundered daily of the fruits of their toil without redress; really enjoy no constitutional nor legal protection from licentious and murderous outrages upon their persons; and are ruthlessly torn asunder—the tender babe from the arms of its frantic mother—the heart-broken wife from her weeping husband—at the caprice or pleasure of irresponsible tyrants. For the crime of having a dark complexion, they suffer the pangs of hunger, the infliction of stripes, and the ignominy of brutal servitude. They are kept in heathenish darkness by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence.

These are the prominent circumstances in the condition of more than two millions of our people, the proof of which may be found in thousands of indisputable facts, and in the laws of the slaveholding States.

Hence we maintain—That in view of the civil and religious privileges of this nation, the guilt of its oppression is unequalled by any other on the face of the earth; and, therefore, that it is bound to repent instantly, to undo the heavy burden, to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free.

We further maintain—That no man has a right to enslave or imbrute his brother—to hold or acknowledge him, for one moment, as a piece of merchandize—to keep back

his hire by fraud—or to brutalize his mind by denying him the means of intellectual, social, and moral improvement.

The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it, is to usurp the prerogative of JEHOVAH. Every man has a right to his own body—to the products of his own labor—to the protection of law—and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely the sin is as great to enslave an AMERICAN as an AFRICAN.

Therefore we believe and affirm—That there is no difference, in principle, between the African slave trade and American slavery—That every American citizen, who retains a human being in involuntary bondage, as his property, is, [according to Scripture,] a MAN-STEALER—That the slaves ought instantly to be set free, and brought under the protection of law—That if they had lived from the time of Pharaoh down to the present period, and had been entailed through successive generations, their right to be free could never have been alienated, but their claims would have constantly risen in solemnity—That all those laws which are now in force, admitting the right of slavery, are therefore before God utterly null and void; being an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative, a daring infringement on the law of Nature, a base overthrow of the very foundations of the social compact, a complete extinction of all the relations, endearments, and obligations of mankind, and a presumptuous transgression of all the holy commandments—and that therefore they ought to be instantly abrogated.

We further believe and affirm—That all persons of color, who possess the qualifications which are demanded of others, ought to be admitted forthwith to the enjoyment of the same privileges, and the exercise of the same prerogatives, as others—That the paths of preferment, of wealth, and of intelligence, should be opened as widely to them as to persons of a white complexion.

We maintain that no compensation should be given to the planters emancipating their slaves—Because it would be a surrender of the great fundamental principle, that man cannot hold property in man—Because SLAVERY IS A CRIME, AND THEREFORE IT IS NOT AN ARTICLE TO BE SOLD—Because the holders of slaves are not the just proprietors of what they claim; freeing the slaves is not depriving them of property, but restoring it to its right owners; it is not wronging the master, but righting the slave—restoring him to himself—Because immediate and general emancipation would only destroy nominal, not real property: it would not

amputate a limb or break a bone of the slaves, but by infusing motives into their breasts, would make them doubly valuable to the masters as free laborers: and, because, if compensation is to be given at all, it should be given to the outraged and guiltless slaves, and not to those who have plundered and abused them.

We regard, as delusive, cruel and dangerous, any scheme of expatriation which pretends to aid, either directly or indirectly, in the emancipation of the slaves, or to be a substitute for the immediate and total abolition of slavery.

We fully and unanimously recognize the sovereignty of each State, to legislate exclusively on the subject of slavery which is tolerated within its limits; we concede that Congress, *under the present national compact*, has no right to interfere with any of the slave States, in relation to this momentous subject.

But we maintain that Congress has a right, and is solemnly bound, to suppress the domestic slave trade between the several States, and to abolish slavery in those portions of our territory which the Constitution has placed under its exclusive jurisdiction.

We also maintain that there are, at the present time, the highest obligations resting upon the people of the free States, to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States. They are now living under a pledge of their tremendous physical force to fasten the galling fetters of tyranny upon the limbs of millions in the Southern States; they are liable to be called at any moment to suppress a general insurrection of the slaves; they authorize the slave owner to vote for three-fifths of his slaves as property, and thus enable him to perpetuate his oppression; they support a standing army at the south for its protection; and they seize the slave who has escaped into their territories, and send him back to be tortured by an enraged master or a brutal driver. This relation to slavery is criminal and full of danger: **IT MUST BE BROKEN UP.**

These are our views and principles—these, our designs and measures. With entire confidence in the over-ruling justice of God, we plant ourselves upon the Declaration of our Independence and the truths of Divine Revelation as upon the **EVERLASTING ROCK.**

We shall organize Anti-Slavery Societies, if possible, in every city, town, and village in our land.

We shall send forth Agents to lift up the voice of remonstrance, of warning, of entreaty, and of rebuke.

We shall circulate, unsparingly and extensively, anti-slavery tracts and periodicals.

We shall enlist the pulpit and the press in the cause of the suffering and the dumb.

We shall aim at a purification of the churches from all participation in the guilt of slavery.

We shall encourage the labor of freemen rather than that of the slaves, by giving a preference to their productions: and

We shall spare no exertions nor means to bring the whole nation to speedy repentance.

Our trust for victory is solely in GOD. *We* may be personally defeated, but our principles never. TRUTH, JUSTICE, REASON, HUMANITY, must and will gloriously triumph. Already a host is coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and the prospect before us is full of encouragement.

Submitting this DECLARATION to the candid examination of the people of this country, and of the friends of liberty throughout the world, we hereby affix our signatures to it; pledging ourselves that, under the guidance and by the help of Almighty God, we will do all that in us lies, consistently with this Declaration of our principles, to overthrow the most execrable system of slavery, that has ever been witnessed upon earth—to deliver our land from its deadliest curse—to wipe out the foulest stain which rests upon our national escutcheon—and to secure to the colored population of the United States, all the rights and privileges which belong to them as men, and as Americans—come what may to our persons, our interests, or our reputations—whether we live to witness the triumph of LIBERTY, JUSTICE and HUMANITY, or perish untimely as martyrs in this great, benevolent, and holy cause.

Done in Philadelphia, this sixth day of December, A. D. 1833,

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

ART. II. The object of this Society is the entire abolition of slavery in the United States. While it admits that each State in which slavery exists, has, by the Constitution of the United States, the exclusive right to *legislate* in regard to its abolition in said State, it shall aim to convince all our fellow-citizens, by arguments addressed to their understandings and consciences, that slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned, require its *immediate abandonment*, without expatriation. The Society will also endeavor, in a constitutional way, to influence Congress to put an end to the domestic slave trade, and to abolish slavery in all those portions of our common country which come under its control, especially in the District of Columbia,—and likewise to prevent the extension of it to any state that may be hereafter admitted to the Union.

ART. III. This Society shall aim to elevate the character and condition of the people of color, by encouraging their intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, and by removing public prejudice, that thus they may, according to their intellectual and moral worth, share an equality with the whites, of civil and religious privileges; but this Society will never, in any way, countenance the oppressed in vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force.

ART. IV. Any person who consents to the principles of this Constitution, who contributes to the funds of this Society, and is not a slaveholder, may be a member of this Society, and shall be entitled to vote at the meetings.

[Articles 5, 6, and 7th relate to officers. Art. 8th fixes the 'annual meeting at such time and place as the Executive Committee may direct,' &c.]

ART. IX. Any Anti-Slavery Society, or association, founded on the same principles, may become auxiliary to this Society. The Officers of each Auxiliary Society shall be ex-officio members of the Parent Institution, and shall be entitled to deliberate and vote in the transaction of its concerns.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

PREAMBLE.

Whereas, we believe that Slavery is contrary to the precepts of Christianity, dangerous to the liberties of the country, and ought immediately to be abolished; and whereas, we believe that the citizens of Massachusetts not only have the right to protest against it, but are under the highest obligation to seek its removal by a moral influence; and whereas, we believe that the free people of color are unrighteously oppressed, and stand in need of our sympathy and benevolent co-operation; therefore, recognizing the inspired declaration that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' and in obedience to our Savior's golden rule, 'all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;' we agree to form ourselves into a Society, and to be governed by the following

CONSTITUTION.

ART. I. This Society shall be called the MASSACHUSETTS ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY, and shall be auxiliary to the American Anti-Slavery Society.

ART. II. The objects of the Society shall be, to endeavor, by all means sanctioned by law, humanity and religion, to effect the abolition of slavery in the United States; to improve the character and condition of the free people of color, to inform and correct public opinion in relation to their situation and rights, and obtain for them equal civil and political rights and privileges with the whites.

ART. III. Any person by signing the Constitution, and paying to the Treasurer fifteen dollars as a life subscription, or two dollars annually, shall be considered a member of the Society, and entitled to a copy of all its official publications.

[Articles 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10, relate to officers and their duties. Art. 6, fixes the annual meeting 'on the fourth Wednesday of January.' Art. 12, provides for Quarterly meetings 'on the last Monday of March, June and September,' at such place as the Board of Managers shall direct; and also for the calling of 'special meetings, by the Board, or by the Recording Secretary, on application from ten members of the Society.']

Wm. A. F. Leach